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Human resources management

Post structure of the Secretariat

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 19 of section I of General Assembly resolution 52/220 of 22 December 1997, by which the Secretary-General was requested to report on developments in the post structure of the Secretariat over the past ten years, on the forward-looking human resources management policy that he intended to develop, for both the short and medium term, with a view to rejuvenating the Organization, and on the impact that such a policy should have on developments in post structure in the future. The present report provides statistics for the past five bienniums.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report responds to paragraph 19 of section I of General Assembly resolution 52/220 of 22 December 1997, by which the Secretary-General was requested to report on developments in the post structure of the Secretariat over the past ten years, on the forward-looking human resources management policy that he intended to develop in the short and medium term, with a view to rejuvenating the Organization, and on the impact that such a policy should have on developments in post structure in the future.

II. Authorized post levels

2. Historical information on the number of authorized (established and temporary) posts for the past five bienniums is presented in the table contained in the annex to the present document. Information is provided for posts authorized in the regular budget (total expenditure sections) and in income section 3 (revenue-producing activities). Analysis is limited to statistics pertaining to regular budget posts.

III. Statistical changes in numbers of posts

3. The post structure of the Secretariat is established as an integral part of the review and approval process for the biennial programme budget, within the framework of the medium-term plan. As such, it is closely related to the specific programmes and subprogrammes mandated by the General Assembly. Accordingly, the specific levels of posts and their number are directly linked to the functions to be discharged by each organizational entity responsible for sections of the programme budget. New posts are proposed only on a highly selective basis by the Secretary-General at the time of the presentation of the proposed programme budget.

4. From 1988 to 1999, the total number of authorized posts in the Secretariat declined by 1,155 (11.7 per cent). The number of posts in the Professional and higher categories declined by 216 (5.6 per cent). Over the same period, the number of posts in the General Service and related categories dropped by 939 (15.5 per cent). Within the Professional and higher categories, the number of posts at the level of Under-Secretary-General has remained relatively constant, whereas the number of Assistant Secretary-General posts has declined by 18 per cent. The number of D-2 posts has dropped by 12 per cent, D-1 posts by 5 per cent, P-4 posts by 4 per cent, P-3 posts by 1.5 per cent and P-2/1 posts by 23 per cent. The number of P-5 posts has increased by 0.6 per cent. There was a particularly pronounced reduction in the number of overall posts during the biennium 1998–1999. In the Professional and higher categories, the reduction between the last biennium and the current one was 343 posts, or almost 9 per cent. In the General Service and related categories, the number of authorized posts has decreased during the two latest bienniums by 1,204 (19 per cent).

5. The ratio between posts in the Professional and higher categories and the General Service and related categories has not altered significantly over the past decade. During the biennium 1988–1989, the ratio was 39 to 61 per cent. By the biennium 1998–1999, the ratio was 41 to 59 per cent. Within the Professional and higher categories, during the biennium 1988–1989, the ratio of P-1 to P-3 staff, compared with the total, was 42 to 58 per cent, compared with 41 to 59 per cent during the biennium 1998–1999. The ratio of staff at the Director level to the overall total for the category similarly showed little change during the same period — from 9.2 to 90.8 per cent during the biennium 1988–1989, to 9.1 to 90.9 per cent during the biennium 1998–1999.

IV. Forward-looking human resources management policy

6. In terms of the goals of the Secretary-General, in the short and medium term, with respect to his forward-looking human resources management policy, the Secretary-General's overall vision is contained in his report, entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform",[1] in which, *inter alia*, he called for a simplified structure that avoids duplication and achieves greater impact; empowered and responsible staff and managers; a leaner and more efficient United Nations Secretariat; and an organization that fosters management excellence and is accountable for achieving results determined by the Member States.

7. Subsequently, during the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General set out an updated and strategic plan for human resources management in his report on human resources management reform.[2] In that document, the Secretary-General outlined the overall strategic direction, work in progress and future actions he intends to undertake to further develop a modern human resources management capability within the Organization. Each of the components of this strategy are interrelated and, taken together, represent his policy with a view to revitalizing the Organization.

8. Several aspects of the human resources management reform strategy are specifically intended to address the attraction and retention of junior professionals within the Organization and will therefore assist in the "rejuvenation of the Secretariat". Ongoing career development programmes for junior professionals are already having an impact on this group of staff members. In his report on human resources reform, the Secretary-General indicated his intention to build a new career development programme for entry-level professional staff with the development of a system of managed reassignments with the express purpose of providing these key staff, at the outset of their careers, with opportunities to broaden their experiences allowing for greater opportunities for career development.[3]

9. As an integral part and building block of the reform of human resources management, the Secretariat has developed an improved human resources planning capacity to compare trends in the demographics of the Secretariat population and to ensure enhanced succession planning.

V. Conclusion

10. At a time of changing mandates for entities of the Secretariat, it is difficult to define an optimal post structure for the Secretariat as a whole that is not closely related to the needs of the programme budget. Each department/office must be viewed as a separate entity in such an undertaking to ensure that the requisite resources, in terms of both posts and staff, are available to programme managers. The changing role and responsibilities of departments/offices make the abstract determination of optimal post structure difficult. The detailed elements of the mandates for each department/office determine the number of posts at each grade required to fulfil the particular mandate. The post structure thus reflects programme decisions.

11. With an expanded human resources planning capability, the Department of Management is working with programme managers to analyse human resources trends within specific departments/offices, in order to forecast vacancies, identify losses of skills and competencies through retirement and other forms of attrition and ensure that the Organization is capable of effectively fulfilling its present and future mandates and, at the same time, meeting the development needs and career aspirations of individual staff members.

12. The Department of Management will monitor changes in the post structure of each department/office and will work with programme managers to ensure that proposals for posts take into account not only the programmatic needs, but the need for career development of staff. The Secretary-General will continue to be guided by the priorities established by the Member States in the process of approval of the programme budget with regard to the future post structure of the Organization.

Notes

[1] A/51/950 and Adds.1–6.

[2] A/53/414.

[3] Ibid., para. 45.

Annex

Authorized (established and temporary) posts for the bienniums from 1988–1989 to 1998–1999

(Regular budget)

	Total expenditure sections						*Income section 3 Revenue-producing activities*					
	1988–1989[a]	*1990–1991*[b]	*1992–1993*[c]	*1994–1995*[d]	*1996–1997*[e]	*1998–1999*[f]	*1988–1989*[a]	*1990–1991*[b]	*1992–1993*[c]	*1994–1995*[d]	*1996–1997*[e]	*1998–1999*[f]
Professional and higher categories												
USG	27	28	21	23	24	26	–	–	–	–	–	–
ASG	22	20	16	16	16	18	–	–	–	–	–	–
D-2	85	84	78	83	83	75	–	–	–	–	–	–
D-1	267	266	274	279	270	253	1	1	1	1	1	1
P-5	667	662	679	704	719	671	2	2	1	2	2	2
P-4	1 145	1 140	1 146	1 175	1 185	1 098	7	7	7	6	7	9
P-3	1 059	1 072	1 079	1 127	1 150	1 044	10	10	10	10	10	7
P-2/1	565	555	535	538	517	436	8	8	8	7	5	5
Subtotal	**3 837**	**3 827**	**3 828**	**3 945**	**3 964**	**3 621**	**28**	**28**	**27**	**26**	**25**	**24**
General Service and related categories	6 059	6 057	6 089	6 324	6 048	5 120	138	138	137	134	113	110
Total[g]	**9 896**	**9 884**	**9 917**	**10 269**	**10 012**	**8 741**	**166**	**166**	**164**	**160**	**138**	**134**

[a] Data for the biennium 1988–1989 from *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 6* (A/44/6/Rev.1).

[b] Data for the biennium 1990–1991 from *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 6* (A/46/6/Rev.1).

[c] Data for the biennium 1992–1993 from *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 6A* (A/48/6/Rev.1/Add.1).

[d] Data for the biennium 1994–1995 from revised appropriation stage of unpublished source.

[e] Data for the biennium 1996–1997 from *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 6* (A/52/6/Rev.1) and an unpublished source.

[f] Data for the biennium 1998–1999 from un unpublished source.

[g] Total staffing table includes 22 posts retained in section 39 according to proposals contained in the report on revised estimates as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/212 of 23 December 1992 (see A/C.5/47/88).